

To An Unknown God (Acts 16 and 17)

One of my favorite events is the apostle Paul's life took place in the city of Athens while he was on his second missionary journey. He had earlier gone to Macedonia because he had concluded that God, in a vision, had called him to preach in that area north of Greece. His preaching there had converted Lydia, one of the foremost women in the city of Philippi. His healing of a fortune-telling, demon-possessed girl landed him and his companion Silas in prison. While there, he preached Christ to the jailer, causing the jailer and his family to be baptized into Jesus Christ.

There was a riot in Thessalonica, yet Paul's preaching caused many men and God-fearing Greeks and **"not a few prominent women"** to become followers of Christ. And in Berea, which had many who **"examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true,"** Paul and Silas were able to change the lives of Jews and **"prominent Greek women and many Greek men."**

In Athens, Paul is troubled because of the fact that the city was full of idols. Athens had been the center of the worship of Greek gods in the years when Greece dominated the world, and it still seemed to be an important city for the worship of Greek gods. There were **"objects of worship"** and altars everywhere. In spite of this, Paul was able to reason with **"Jews and God-fearing Greeks"** in the synagogue and in the agora, the market place.

While in the market place, some Stoic and Epicurean philosophers began to dispute with him, believing Paul was preaching a new philosophy – one that many believed to simply be the words of a **"babbling."** He seemed, to them, to be **"advocating foreign gods"** because he preached **"Jesus and the resurrection."**

He met these philosophers **"who spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas"** at the Areopagus, a meeting place that had been in earlier times where the city officials met. The Areopagus sat on Mars hill, a short distance away from the Acropolis where many of the places of worship to the Greek gods were. It is here that Paul defends his message. But it is the way he defends it that makes it unique.

Paul first states that he had seen an altar **"To an Unknown God."** It is this "unknown" God that Paul preaches to them about. This is what Paul tells them:

1. This **"unknown god"** created and sustains the world.
2. He doesn't live in temples made by men.
3. He wants man to seek Him and serve Him.
4. He acknowledges all of us who reach out to Him as His children.
5. He wants us to acknowledge Him as a **"divine being,"** not an idol of **"gold, or silver or stone."**
6. We must repent of our sins.
7. He will judge us by the standard set by Jesus Christ.

8. Jesus had the authority, given to Him by God, as evidenced by God raising Jesus from the dead.

As in other places Paul preached, it is the resurrection that gets the most attention. It is said that some “**sneered,**” some said, “**We want to hear you again on this subject,**” still others believed.

Isn't this the way many react to the gospel of Jesus Christ? No matter that some outright disbelieve and others want to hear more, it is those who believed that are the most important. No matter what the reaction, we should be constantly encouraged at the power the good news of Christ has to save.